

THESIS,
HIGHER EDUCATION BY THE STATE,

FOR THE DEGREE OF



IN THE SCHOOL OF MODERN LANGUAGES

BY

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1886.

The establishment of State Universities properly so called, in the West, gave rise some years ago to considerable controversy between those who supported "endowed" and private colleges, and those who were ardent advocates of higher education by the State. Nor is this controversy a settled one today. It still continues but by no means with that force which once characterized it. The advocates of higher education by the State have less necessity for defending their principle as the State year by year more fully recognizes it, while those who are opposed to this principle see the uselessness of open opposition for the same reasons.

Whether higher education in America owes its origin to the State or to private endowments and voluntary gifts is another mooted question

and scarcely concerns us here), since we are not to trace its history now but simply to inquire into its present tendencies in order to justify them.

Unquestionably the present tendency is to make the State the guardian of higher education where as yet no wealthy and renowned institutions of learning exist. But this plan is by no means a new one, nor is its adoption confined to the western and southern states. Much as has been claimed for private munificence and religious zeal in the furtherance of higher education in America, the fair-minded student of the history of education in this country must come to the conclusion that the State is the source of all education primary as well as secondary. This is as true of Harvard

College as it is of the common, the grammar, and the high school.

When we refer then to the establishment and maintenance of State universities we find that this is no new system but simply a reverting to the old plan adopted by our forefathers over two-hundred years ago. The peculiar condition of educational affairs in the West at the time of the establishment of State universities in the principal states gave rise to much needless controversy and has caused up to this time that antagonism to State universities which every true friend of education cannot help but deplore.

The cause of higher education in the West was, and is today, seriously impeded, not through a lack of so-called colleges and universities, but, strange though it may appear, by a super-

abundance of them. There was such a division of interests as to make it almost impossible to give rise to strong central institutions of learning unless the State came forward to offer her fostering care and generous support, in order that she might in course of time have educational institutions commensurate with her greatness in this bond of states. This the State has done, thus adding the last and strongest link to our grand system of public education.

Let us now consider some of the principal points of opposition urged against higher education by the State. In the consideration of this we are invariably confronted by such questions as the following: Why should a State ~~be~~ expend large sums annually upon its State university when there are numbers of private

or "endowed" institutions in that same State that are carrying on their work ably and unaided at least so far as the State is concerned? Why should a State be taxed to educate young men and young women who go to school in order that they may better their own conditions and advance their own interests? Wherein doth lie the justice of this? What special benefit does the State derive from her public institutions of learning? These are questions which are continually arising, and which those who are enjoying the benefits of the munificence of every great common-wealth should carefully consider.

In looking at these questions simply from a pecuniary point of view and without questioning the validity of the premises, we are forced

to admit that we can by no means dispose of them as readily as we would like to do.

Has not the State done her duty when she has educated us in her public schools? Has she not prepared us sufficiently in those same public schools to bear the burdens of citizenship and to comprehend our true relations to the State? Surely her obligations to the individual should go no farther! We may follow out this course of reasoning ^{on} unaided by the light of philosophy or philanthropy, — unaided by those general principles that govern enlightenment and culture, — unaided by those broad and liberal views which form the very basis of our government, and it will not be difficult to predict what the conclusion must necessarily be.

Pursued, on the other hand, a course of reasoning into which all the above mentioned elements shall enter in due proportion and receive due significance. Can you still question the justice of the plan pursued by the State? Not only will you come to the conclusion that it is perfectly legitimate for the State to aid higher education, but also that it becomes her duty to do so, and that she alone presents the proper medium for the dissemination of all that learning which is connected with and applied to the development of all her resources, either directly or indirectly.

For the sake of convenience all opponents to higher education by the State may be considered under three heads:

1. Those who are so penurious and nearsighted

as to look upon public welfare as merely secondary to self.

2.- Those who would have educational institutions and educational affairs conducted on purely business principles.

3.- Those who are supporters of the denominational system either through personal interest or otherwise, and who believe that their rights are infringed upon when the State offers to aid higher education.

Concerning the first of these classes but little need be said. It is scarcely worthy of note. In public spirited America such pernicious principles are considered almost criminal and it is ^{only} ~~now~~ now and then that some one has the hardihood to express such views even though many more might be found who secretly entertain them.

It is that principle which stands in the way of all progress, and, which, if not suppressed, would threaten all existing institutions.

The second class includes those persons who claim that every school should be self-supporting, and that the State should have no more to do with higher education directly than she has to do with any other enterprise carried on by her citizens. However honestly the advocates of this view may believe in it, they certainly can lay but little claim to far-sightedness and to genuine public spirit. This class is by no means akin to the first mentioned. In it will be found men who readily and cheerfully contribute to the general welfare: men who are strong supporters of our common school system and who do not even for a moment question the right of the State to

establish high schools and academies. Nor do they fail to give their aid to advance charitable projects and such other institutions as are indispensable to the welfare of modern civilization. But when it comes to the question of supporting institutions of higher learning by the State, they will say: "No, we are opposed to this. It is unjust. The State has no right to tax her citizens for the support of such institutions, the benefits of which can be enjoyed by but a comparatively small number of persons, who are in the first place specially favored by good fortune, and who in the second place, desire principally to further their own interests." How much force there is in these arguments I hope to show subsequently.

Lastly let us consider the third class of those who do not favor higher education by the State,

To analyze this class thoroughly and to account for all ~~these~~ various motives which actuate the parties included, is a task which I shall not attempt to undertake here. At best but a few principal points can be mentioned.

Not very long after the close of the Revolutionary War, religious movements became especially active among the people of the newly established nation, causing many different religious views to be entertained. As civilization was gradually marching west-ward the adherents of these different sects carried with them their religious zeal, each sect striving diligently to gain foot-hold in the rising country. To aid them in this they began at even a comparatively early date to establish educational institutions which were to promulgate their doctrines, prepare their clergy, and ed-

create such others as could or would attend. Now this process has gone on, long after the special needs for such institutions has ceased, and almost long enough to injure seriously the cause of higher education in some of our principal states, by making it almost impossible to establish in them central institutions of learning representing a high grade of scholarship.

It has gone so far that Illinois today can number twenty-five such institutions while Ohio claims thirty-two. As a natural consequence the resources of the one are crippled by the other, and the cause of higher education languishes. It cannot be otherwise and hence it can be justly said that higher education has been retarded rather than advanced by a superabundance of so-called colleges and universities. — "But," some one will reply,

"Every educational institution in the land, however weak, is a source of enlightenment, and educational advantages are thus directly offered to the masses of every locality so which is fortunate enough to possess one of these institutions. Many are thus benefitted who would never get an education were the seats of learning fewer and more remote." In other words, the more colleges the more collegiate. But is this true? No it's not. Reliable statistics show that the proportion of college-bred men to the population is much less now than it was years when there were ~~but~~ fewer colleges and when a college course required greater sacrifice than now. Shall we say that because in Germany there are but few institutions of higher learning the people are not as intelligent as in America

where there are over three-hundred institutions all of which claim that they offer the advantages of higher education? The fallacy becomes evident at even a casual glance. Some one will ask: "Why is this so?" The answer is not difficult. The greater the number of institutions the lower the grade of scholarship, and the lower the grade of scholarship, the less value is attached to it. This explains the proportionate decrease of collegiates in a country where ~~everything~~ else flourishes.

Many of these colleges have been struggling for years to carry on a feeble existence and are now clamoring because the State universities are slowly but surely putting an end to their struggles. They may continue to exist, as many even today are existing, in name only. In reality

75
they can no longer be compared with the growing State universities, although they exert still considerable opposing influence.

It is not infrequently urged by supporters of the denominational system that in no other than a distinctively religious college would the character of young men be safe. The argument that because State universities are not religious schools it must follow that they are irreligious. Another fallacy which I do not deem at all necessary to expose. True, the number is greater and the faculty can consequently not exercise such supervision as where the number is small. But, if this personal supervision becomes necessary for the student who enters college, it is safe to say that the chances of failure to develop true morality and manhood in him would be

76
the same in the small colleges as in the State university.

The advantages of strong central institutions of learning attended by hundreds of students and in charge of a corps of instructors of acknowledged ability, are too evident to require proof on my part.

Every denominational school, founded as such, represents an interest different from and often opposed to every other similar institution. Its main object is to propagate some religious creed. The principle of union and centralization is wanting. Distinctions between classes and religions do not fail to arise. This is in direct opposition to the genius of our government. No one can deny the right of any church to establish schools where its own beliefs and principles shall be

inculcated. Nor can any one deny that the founding of such schools has been and continues to be, in many cases, a barrier to higher education.

Some of the questions which confront the supporters of higher education by the State, mentioned in the beginning of this production, remain still unanswered. It will be best to set forth some reasons why the State should support higher education, and thus treat them fully in this connection.

For the sake of convenience we may assign three principal reasons why the State ~~the State~~ should be taxed for higher education. They are as follows:

- 1.- It puts a thorough education within the reach of all who really desire it.

2.— The very system of our schools and the very form of government demand it.

3.— In matters fraught with so much importance to the State, she ought not stand aloof and leave to private munificence or to religious zeal that which it is primarily her duty to do.

The first of these reasons may not appear so very forcible especially when we come to consider that very few State universities are absolutely free (as they ought to be) and that the tuition in denominational or private institutions has been made so low that no great difference exists on that score. But let us look a little farther into the question. When I say a "thorough" education, I mean all those branches of learning usually included in the different courses of instruction in a university proper. No denomina-

79
tional or private school can offer a thoroughly scientific or polytechnical course of training for five times the amount of the tuition required at the University of Illinois or any similar institution, if it had no resources other than the tuition fees. The State alone can bring such instruction within the reach of all who have any opportunity whatsoever to go to school. But were they expected to pay the actual cost of the tuition, many would forever be denied the grand privileges they are now enjoying.

The second reason seems to me to be of no less importance. There should be in every State a central institution of learning of acknowledged superiority, in direct communication with the public schools, and under the control of the State. This establishes a complete system of public ed-

education from the lowest to the highest. Why should the State be taxed at all for education of any kind? Surely no one will question the right or propriety of the State in supporting free schools. What is the difference? The State university is nothing but a free school of a higher grade and on a grander scale. The public schools, aside from the object of imparting knowledge and fitting all alike for the duties of citizenship, have another task to perform of equally as much importance. They act namely, as the great levelers of society. Class distinctions can be avoided only by giving all equal chances.

What is true of the public school is true, in no small degree of the State university. All have equal chances and sectional strifes are not known. Points of differences are forgotten and all

labor with a common spirit for the good of the State.

Lastly I desire to prove that it should not be considered merely a gracious policy on the part of the State to aid higher education, but that she must actually consider it one of her most sacred duties. In this connection we must fully bear in mind the true relations between the individual and the State.

The question "Why should the State be taxed to educate young men and young women who go to school in order that they may better their own conditions and further their own interests?" presents itself aptly as the basis for argument. Can there be any conflicting interests between the State and the individual? No, their interests are the same and inseparable. The State advances in direct proportion as the individuals composing

the State advance. One who has been educated by the aid of the State (or in any other manner) has certainly advanced his own interests, and bettered his own condition. Does he better and advance himself by pulling down others, or does he aid and help to elevate them? The answer is obvious.

Every educated man is a potent factor in the community in which he dwells. The relations existing between the State and the individual admit of no conflict of interests, and since this is so, whatever benefits the individual must benefit the State, and vice versa.

It will be remembered that it was stated above that a certain class of persons objected to taxing the State for higher education because but a comparatively small number of all her inhabitants

ants could take advantage of it. This has been, in part, answered by the arguments in the preceding paragraph. In order to show more fully the weakness upon which this opposition rests a few illustrations will suffice.

Is a government to cease making internal improvements because not all are directly benefitted by them? Is the aid which has been given to commerce in the erection of light-houses and in the work of the coast-survey to be withdrawn because only the commercial world receives direct benefit therefrom?

Lastly, shall the State cease to make provisions for the poor, the sick, or the blind because but a few comparatively can take advantage of such provisions?

The State in founding a central institution of learning and there employing a competent force,

meets a two-fold want. She not only fosters and aids higher education, but she also disseminates it, thus giving its fruits to all who stretch forth their hands to receive them.

We come to the conclusion then inevitably that it is the duty of the State, by public taxation, to foster and aid higher education.

Who can deny the right of the State to meet her own wants in a matter fraught with so much importance to her own welfare? It lies in her power alone properly to ~~aid~~ maintain and reward those who by indefatigable zeal and toil aid in the solution of social and scientific problems.